

Scientific Scrague

The Exploits of a New Kind of Detective
By Francis Lynde

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SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

Calvin Sprague, college professor, government chemist and former athlete, comes West to visit his brother, Dick, who is a chemist and a branch railroad. The railroad has been strangely quiet lately, its string of motormen implying some secret rather than ordinary. Sprague sets himself to solve the mystery. Several times the motive of accident has been suggested, but all along the line and have led to the second of a series of accidents. The motive of accident has been suggested, but all along the line and have led to the second of a series of accidents. The motive of accident has been suggested, but all along the line and have led to the second of a series of accidents.

CHAPTER II.

(Continued.)

A Mystery.

TILL I can't believe it of Connolly," Maxwell persisted. "If he sent that message to Timanyoni last night, that makes him responsible for all the other—the devil-messages, as the men are calling them. Some of these have come in the night, while he was on duty. How could he have worked it in that case?"

Again the chemistry expert laughed. "A suspicious person might draw a bunch of inferences," he said, "throwing out a dark hint or so about a concealed cut-in on the wires after they enter the attic of the railroad building and a hidden set of instruments. Also, the same person would probably point to the fact that Connolly wasn't at his desk when the fake wreck notice came last night. It was your chief clerk, Calmaine, who took it from the wire, and he tells me he was subbing for Connolly for a few minutes while Connolly went upstairs for his smoking tobacco."

"My Lord!" said Maxwell. "You've put it upon Connolly, fair and square, Calvin. It's all over but the hanging!"

"There you go again," joked the Government man, with his good natured grin. "I haven't said that Connolly. But I will say this: with another half-day of it, I'll probably be able to turn the case over to Tarbell and the newspapers."

"The newspapers?"

"Yes. That will be a part of the cure for the crazy sickness among your men. Sit tight and say nothing, and by the evening I'll be ready to put you next."

It was late in the afternoon, and the man from Washington had spent much of the intervening time loafing in the different offices sheltered by the headquarters roof, when young Tarbell got a telephone summons from the hotel. In the writing room, which was otherwise deserted, he found the superintendent's guest waiting for him. Sprague waved him to a chair and began at once.

"What did you find out, Mr. Tarbell?"

"Nothing to hurt. The fellow you was asking about went out on the wreck train and came back on it."

"You're kidding me, aren't you?"

"Sure of the first part, and not so sure of the last. I've found half a dozen of the men who saw him get on the train, and they're a little hazy about the back trip, but he must've come back that way, because he didn't come in on the Limited."

"And his wife?"

"Tarbell's lip curled in honest cleanliness. "He ain't got any wife. It was his girl he was expecting, and she didn't come."

"And afterward?" suggested the questioner.

"After he got back he showed up in the office and took his job again, lettin' Cattherton go home."

"The Government man's eyes narrowed, and after a moment he began again:

"How near can you come to keeping your own counsel, Mr. Tarbell?" he demanded abruptly.

"I reckon I can talk a few without sayin' much," said the ex-cowboy. And then, after a pause: "You mean that you don't want to be mixed up in this thing by name, Mr. Sprague?"

"You've hit it exactly. You've got your start and I want you to work it out yourself. Somebody—somebody who is not a thousand miles from your headquarters building over yonder—is working this case, working it for a purpose which he wishes to accomplish without making himself actually and legally responsible. Had you got that far in your own reasoning, Mr. Tarbell?"

"No, indeed! I'm only a plug when it comes down to the sure enough, and he laid part of it."

"You'll learn after a bit," said the chemistry expert shortly. "But let that go. You have the facts now, and they are driven pretty well into a corner. Can you go and get your man?"

"Don't go on supposition, Tarbell. Ask yourself, when you get outside, if you've got the evidence that the court will demand. Ask yourself, also, if you know of your own knowledge, or if you've only allowed yourself to be hypnotized into your belief. If you can get satisfactory answers to these questions, go to it and bring back the money, as they say up in Seattle."

For what remained of the afternoon after Tarbell went away Sprague sat in the writing room and wrote letters, calling and addressing the last one just as Maxwell came over to see to dinner with him. At table there were plenty of usual back numbers in the way of college reminiscences to be threshed over, and Sprague carefully kept the talk in this innocuous field until after they had left the dining room to go for a smoke on the loggia porch. When the cigars were alight, Maxwell would no longer be choked off.

"Anything new in the wire-devil business, Calvin?" he asked.

"I've turned the case over to Tarbell, as I promised. I'm through with my part of it."

"What's that?" ejaculated the superintendent. "You've got your man?"

"Tarbell will get him—most probably before he goes to bed to-night. We've a fine young fellow, that reformed cowboy of yours, Dick. I like him."

Maxwell was still gasping. "You're a wonder, Calvin—a latter-day wis-

ard! Good Heavens! Do you realize that we've been working on this thing for a month? And you've cleaned it up in a day!"

The chemistry expert was smiling good-naturedly.

"Perhaps it came at a fortuitous moment, and had exceptional advantages," he demurred.

"But are you sure?" demanded Maxwell, soberly.

"No, sure that if your 'devil' had caused any loss of life in his monkey-ings I could go into court and hang him."

"Thank God!" said the superintendent, then again, as if an enormous weight had been lifted from his shoulders. "Thank God!"

Sprague looked up quickly. "You've been taking it pretty hard, haven't you, Dick? Any special reason?"

"Yes. You know, Ford, our President; he has made the Pacific Southwestern System—made it out of whole cloth; and, incidentally, he has made a good few of us fellows who have fought with him shoulder to shoulder from the first. When I was last in New York, a couple of months ago, he rode from the club to the station in the taxi with me. He was in trouble of some sort—he didn't tell me what it was; but the last thing he said as I was boarding the train gave me some notion of it. 'Run that jerk-water Short Line of yours, Dick, as if you were carrying all your eggs to market and had them all in one basket,' he said, and then he added: 'No wrecks, Dick, if you have to sit up nights to head them off.'"

Sprague was smoking peacefully. It was perhaps too much to expect that a man whose problems were chiefly in the field of laboratory science should be very deeply interested in one in which the elements were merely human. When he spoke again it was to recur to his favorable impression of Tarbell. "I like that young fellow," he said in conclusion. "He'll pull you all out of the hole—with a little timely help from the newspapers. When he gets the ball into his hands and starts down the field with it, you'd best be prepared for some pretty sensational developments. They're due."

For a while Maxwell said nothing, and the fine lines between his eyes deepened slowly into a frown of anxiety. Finally he said: "I've got 'em, too, Calvin—the 'jimmies,' I mean. My wife and the two kiddies are coming home on the Apache tonight, and don't you know I had half a mind to wire her to stop over in Copah until I could go after her? That's a pretty pass for things to come to, isn't it? I'm waiting to get the members of his family ride over his own particular piece of railroad?"

Sprague flipped the ash from his cigar. "That's one of the bridges you don't have to cross until you come to it," Maxwell cut out of his chair and refused Sprague's offer of a fresh cigar.

"No," he said, "this has been one of the days when I've smoked too much. I'm going over to the office and I'll be there in the pulse of things. When it gets too dull for you over here come across and break in. If I'm not in my own office you'll find me at the railroad building, or at the headquarters building, or at the loggia porch and took the chair next to the man from Washington, who was still sitting as Maxwell had left him and still smoking."

"And his wife?"

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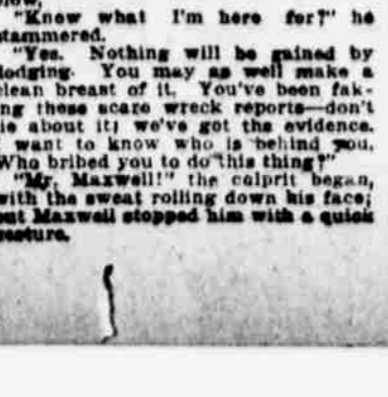
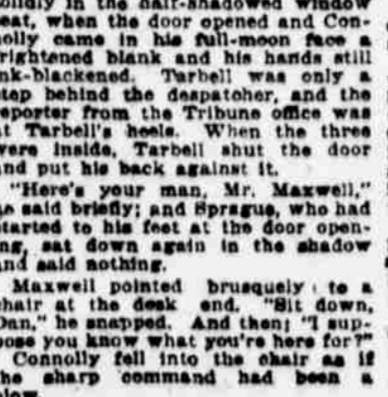
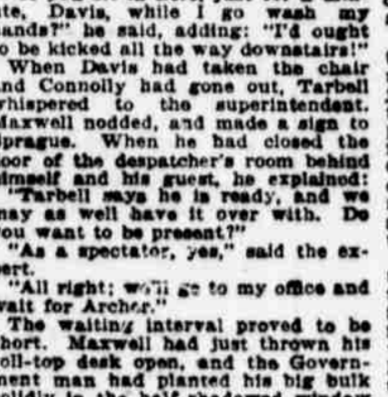
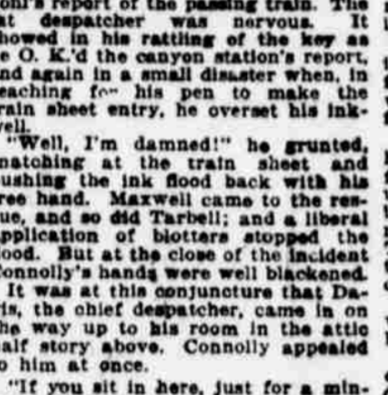
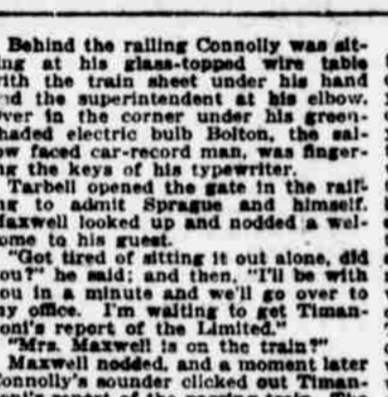
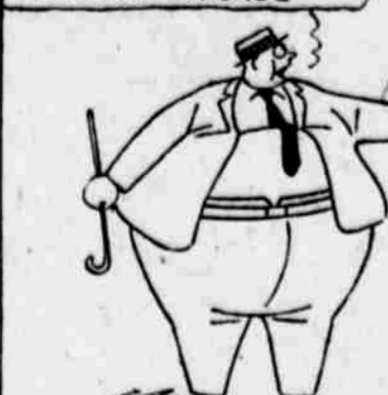
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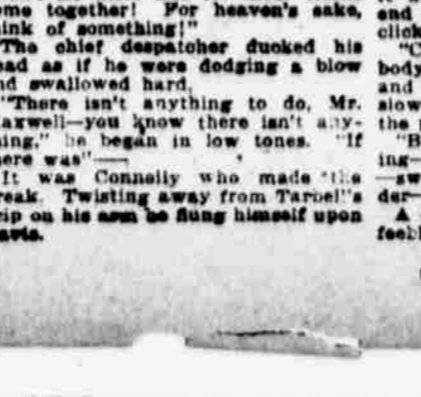
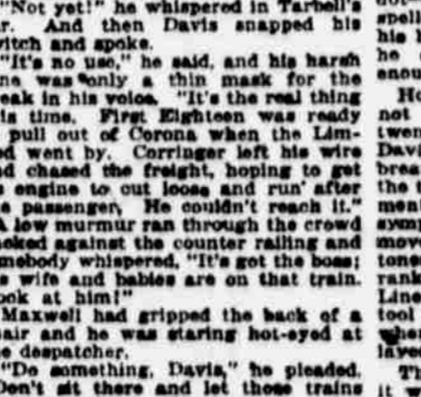
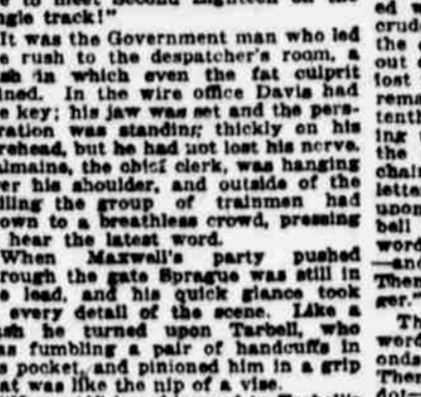
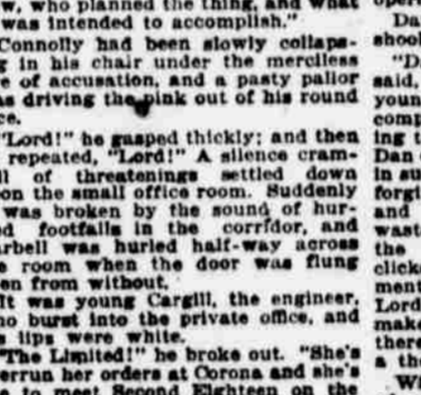
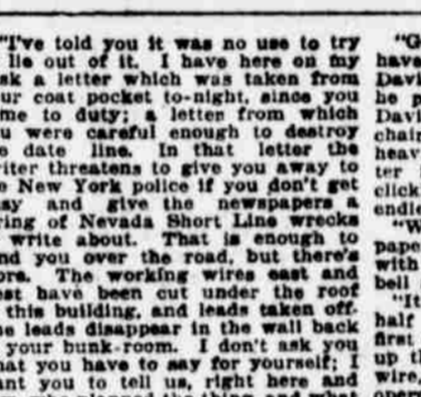
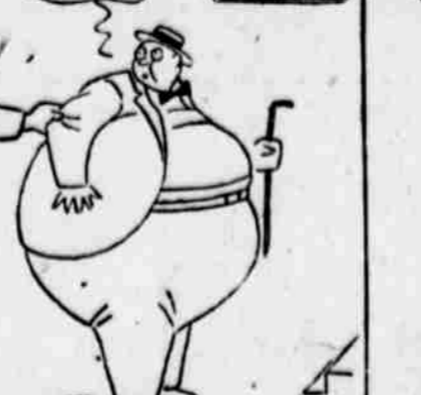
Why Not?

COME ON BILL I KNOW
A PLACE WHERE YOU CAN
GET A GOOD TURKISH
BATH FOR A NICKEL



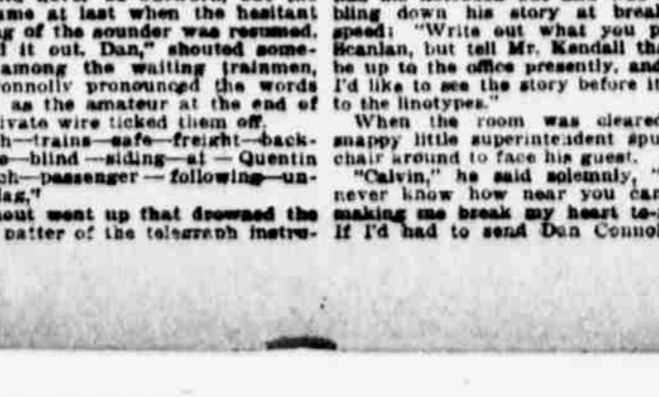
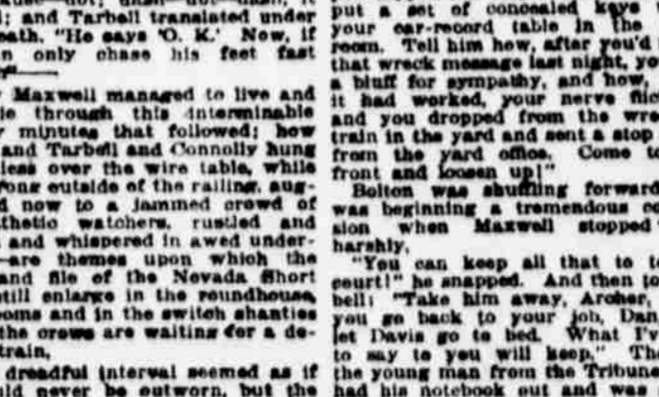
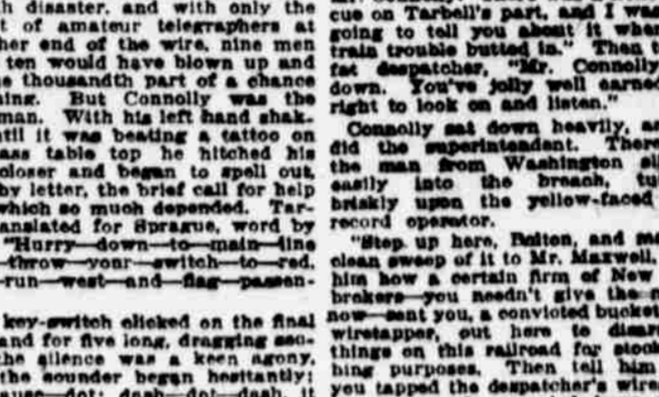
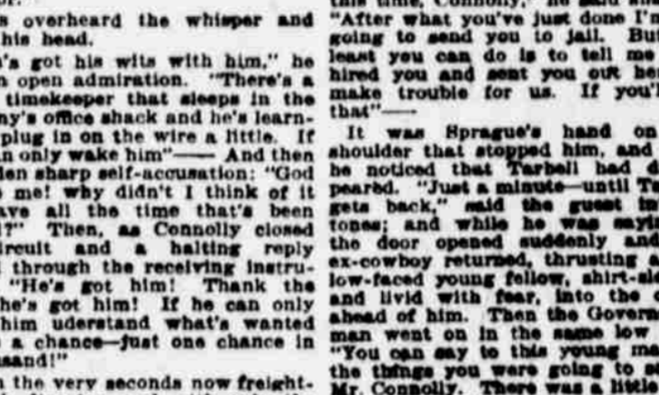
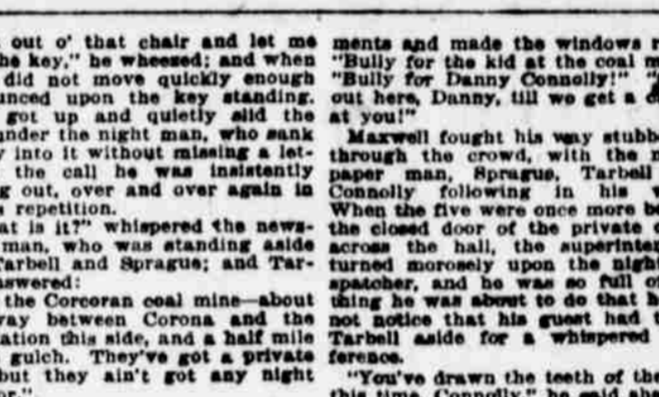
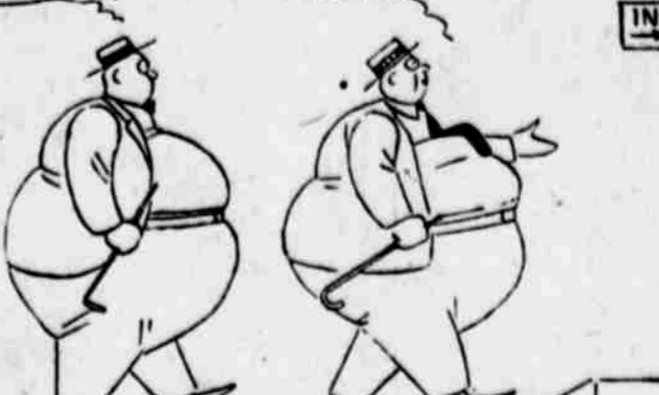
By Maurice Ketten

NEW YORK
SUBWAY



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NEXT WEEK'S COMPLETE NOVEL IN THE EVENING WORLD

Jacqueline of Golden River
By VICTOR ROUSSEAU

all after what he did in the other room a little while ago. The chemistry expert was grinning joyously. "It was a curious little slip," he commented. "I thought Tarbell was on; never suspected for a moment that he wasn't until he butted Connolly in here and shot him at you."

"But you know Connolly wasn't the man? How on top of earth did you run it down, in a single day? I can't surround it, even yet."

"It wasn't much of a nut to crack," laughed the expert. "I hope you'll have a harder one for me the next time I happen along. I got my pointer last night—before I knew anything about the nature of your trouble. You see, Bolton was the only man in the outfit who wasn't sincerely jarred and horrified by that fake message. I saw it the minute I'd had a look into the logs. From that on it was easy enough."

"I don't see it," objected Maxwell. "Don't you? I merely argued back-ward from the results I could see. The message was trying to obtain and send a message to a friend of mine in New York. He put me next to a nice little plot in the street to hamper Ford and break down your country credit. Then I foisted around your shack here until I found Bolton's wire-machinery. Bolton didn't catch on, but he was suspicious enough of a stranger like me to take a little measure of precaution by slipping that incriminating letter into Connolly's coat pocket. I supposed Tarbell knew that, or I'd have told him."

Maxwell had been listening in appreciative admiration, but gratitude came quickly to the fore when Sprague paused. "Calvin, there's no telling how many lives you've saved by this little stopover of yours here in Timanyoni. You broke out, you've done it. When that story, properly trimmed down, comes out in the Tribune tomorrow morning, the bare-nerves strain will go off like that—mapping its way across the country. By George! there's the Limited pulling in. I've got to go down and meet the wife and kiddies!"

The big-headed man called himself a chemistry expert and confessed to the riding of many hobbies rose up with a laugh. "You want to show me? All right; take me down to the office and show me Mrs. Maxwell and the babies. As for the other, you know as well as I do that it's all in the day's work. Pity that the wife and the folks; and that would be worse than getting another message from the wire-devil."

"Fine! And I'm hurrying to get home to see the boys. I've been out a week and had begun to think I was never going to get back to the Brown office again. I've been having business little things myself, and have heard of during the past few days."

The big man settled himself still more comfortably in his chair, and then, after a moment, he said: "I've been having business little things myself, and have heard of during the past few days."

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